

APPENDIX IV²⁷

PROCEEDINGS OF GOVERNORS' CONFERENCE WEST OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

Marshall, Texas, Aug. 15, 1863

In obedience to the request of Lt. Genl. E. Kirby Smith, the following Gentlemen met this day for consultation and conference, viz:

From Texas	Gov. F. R. Lubbock, Hon. W. S. Oldham, C. S. Senator, Pendleton Murrah, and Maj. Guy M. Bryan
" Louisiana	Gov. Thos. O. Moore, Col. Manning, Chief Justice Merrick, Associate Justice Voorhies
" Arkansas	Robt. M. Johnson, C. S. Senator and Representative of Gov. Flanagan, C. B. Mitchell, C. S. Senator, and W. K. Patterson
" Missouri	Gov. Thos. C. Reynolds

Whereupon, the Lt. General submitted the following questions for their consideration:

"Memorandum—for the Executives and Representatives of Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri and Texas."

Questions to be considered.

1st—The condition of the States since the Fall of Vicksburg.

The temper of the people, the resources and ability of each State to contribute to the cause and defense of the

²⁷From Francis R. Lubbock Letter Book No. III, February, 1863-November, 1863, pp. 252-267 (Archives Division, Texas State Library).

Department and the best means for bringing into use the whole population for the protection of their houses,

2nd—The best measures for restoring confidence and checking the spread of disloyalty, and keeping the people steadfast in the hope of ultimate triumph of our arms.

3rd—The questions of currency, and the best method of securing the cotton of the Department without causing opposition on the part of the people, and best method of disposing of the same.

4th—The extent of the Civil authority to be exercised referred to by the President, and Secretary of War in their letters of [blank] date to the Lt. General Commanding.

5th—Appointment of Commissioners to confer with the French and Mexican authorities in Mexico.

6th—Arms and Ordinance Stores.

On August 17, the Conference was fully organized by calling Gov. Lubbock to the Chair, and the appointment of W. K. Patterson as Secretary.

On motion, the Chairman appointed the following committees:—

No. 1—Gov. Reynolds, Voorhies, Johnson, Bryan, Oldham, Patterson.

No. 2—Oldham, Merrick, Mitchell, Reynolds, Lubbock.

No. 3—Johnson, Moore, Murrah, Reynolds, Manning, Merrick.

On motion the 1st, 2nd, and 6th propositions of the Lt. General, were referred to Committee No. 1;

The 3rd Proposition was referred to Committee No. 2.

The 4th and 5th Propositions to Committee No. 3.

The Conference took a recess until Tuesday, at 8 o'clock A. M.

Conference met, pursuant to adjournment.

Judge Merrick of Committee No. 2, made the following Report, which was unanimously adopted:

The undersigned Sub-Committee has had under consideration the question submitted by Lt. Genl. E. Kirby Smith as to the extent of the Civil authority to be exercised by him referred to by the Secretary of War in his letter of July 14, 1863, now reports, that in the opinion of the Committee it is intended, that such powers only should be exercised as are now exercised by other officers at Richmond, and which it is absolutely necessary on account of

inability to communicate with Richmond that the General should assume, in order to augment and maintain his army and put the Department in the best state of defense.

The objects to which such powers will extend are enumerated generally in the letter of the Secretary of War, and it is impracticable to be more specific here.

Of course, when the Secretary of War advises the General in Command of the Department, to assume powers not granted by other Departments of the Government, he expects that such powers (which are only powers of Administration, should be exercised according to existing Laws, and that nothing should be changed except the Agents by which the operations of the Government, in respect to this Department, are carried on.

The respective States composing the Department, have organized Government and it could not have been the intention of the Secretary of War to advise the Commanding General to assume Civil Authority which belongs to the States. They still having officers present, ready to perform their respective duties and functions.

(Signed)

Merrick

Col. Pendleton Murrah, from the same Committee, made the following Report:—

The undersigned, a sub-committee, to whom was referred this question, respectfully submits, that the dependence of the Trans Miss. Department, upon the Ports of Mexico for supplies and for communication abroad, together with the relationship of the French and Mexican Governments, at the present time, make an understanding with the authorities by those Governments highly important, if not absolutely essential. The disposition of those Powers, and their officials, can only be ascertained by correspondence with them. The correspondence, under the existing state of things, even as to civil matters, cannot, perhaps, be conducted directly through the Government, and as the correspondence to have reference merely directly to the interests of this Department and its immediate wants, the Laws, whenever the Law speaks, and propriety when the Law is silent, points out the Military Commander of

the Department as the proper official to initiate and conduct, the correspondence. As to the mode of carrying on the correspondence, it is, of course, to be left to the discretion of the Commander; and yet it is not deemed improper to suggest that the importance of the subject authorizes, if it does not require, an Agent intelligent, well informed, of known character, one adapted to inspire confidence of his knowledge and discretion, and not likely to be misled in these times of trial and uncertainty, by mere plausibilities or intimations intended to please to please [sic] and flatter, without promising or guarranteeing [sic] anything of benefit. The selection of such an Agent, and the prosecution of such line of policy, would find its justifications in facts which have already transpired in the conduct of French Officials. These facts forming a basis of inquiry and authorizing an approach to them officially for that purpose, would enable the Agent or Commissioner to sound, upon Mexican soil, both French and Mexican authorities, ascertain their disposition towards our Government, and People, and what we may expect of them in the way of favor or assistance, what credit may be founded upon the various productions &c, in our own territory. Whilst, the Agent might not be dignified by any definite title or grade, which proclaims his authority and its extent, he might, at least, be authorized to make explanations, give assurances, and come to an undertanding, founded upon consummations of especial interest, pointing directly to the wants of this District, and embracing the specific matters pertaining to the general questions of credit and supplies from abroad. It is believed that our situation is such that these enquiries cannot be pushed forward with too much industry and discretion; for, if it be that the French Government is favorably disposed towards our Country, such control has it over the Country and Ports of Mexico, that his will is likely to be the Law, and important results may be anticipated from securing his good will. The condition of the Trans Miss. Department, has wants, what, is believed and ascertained of the disposition of the present authorities, it is believed fully authorizes the Commanding General to do. He cannot be instructed from Richmond as to civil matters pertaining to the agency questions of mere irregularity or even of doubtful authority. In conducting the correspondence, both the interest of the Country and the necessities

under which it labors, will be the law to guide his discretion.

Respectfully submitted.

(Signed)

P. Murrah

which was read, and on motion, unanimously adopted.

Gov. Thos. C. Reynolds from Committee No. 1, made the following Report:

The undersigned to whom was referred the condition of the Trans Miss. Dept. since the fall of Vicksburg, has had the same under consideration, and begs leave to submit the following Report:—

Since the courses of the war, this Department has labored under peculiar difficulties of a very embarrassing character; it has received but a meager share of the limited supplies of arms and munitions of war under the control of the Government. Waving all inquiry, as to the causes which presented adequate supplies from being sent west of the River, it is sufficient to say that the supply of arms, munitions, etc. in this Department, have never been equal to the imperative demands of the army. This was true before the fall of Vicksburg and Port Hudson. Now, since the enemy have entire control of the Mississippi River, and have the Gulf branch effectually blockaded, and the State of Mississippi overrun and governed by military power, we are completely separated from our Confederates East of the River and must abandon all hope of even the imperfect, and irregular supply heretofore received from the Government, and at once, and entirely rely upon our own resources. Beleaguered as we are, the General in command can neither transmit Reports, nor receive communications regularly, from the Seat of Government. Hence, this safety of the People (the Supreme Law) requires that he assume at once and exercise, the Power and Prerogatives of the President of the Confederate States and his Subordinates, in reference to all matters involving the interests of his Department. Our necessities demand this policy, and will not brook delay, and it is believed that all the emergencies of the Country may be met without violating the Constitution and Laws of the Confederate States, and without assuming anything like dictatorial power.

As to the temper of the people, we are compelled to report some disaffection and disloyalty in each of the several States of this Department, and considerable gloom

and despondency, the result of the loss of Vicksburg and other disasters, but the great mass of the people are loyal to the Government of their choice, and have full and unre-served confidence in the ability and integrity of the Lt. General Comm'dg this Department, and we think it safe to say, that they have maturely and considerably deter-mined, that no greater calamity can befall them than sub-jugation or submission to the Federal Government. Refer-ence, in general to arms only, is here made to the resources of the States, because your Committee have not the requi-site information to enable them to give special details. Nor do they deem it important, as the General can, through his subordinate Officers, obtain more copious accurate statis-tics that we can possibly give in this Report. It is thought that Texas can, and will, put into the field from 15 to 20,000 men, including the straggler, teamsters, etc.; she has grain, bacon and beef, to feed her people and the army two years; has four gun factories making 800 guns per month; has metal, copper and tin to make 100 cannon, and gun car-riages for a like number complete and in process of Con-struction, she is making percussion caps successfully; has five powder mills doing good work; has on hand 30,703 lbs. common powder, 25,635 lbs. lead; 90,000 fixed ammunition; 6,234 lbs. buck shot. She has in the field now one Regi-ment, State Troops for frontier protection, well supplied with ammunition. She has distributed a limited supply of powder, lead and caps, to some Counties. She has fur-nished great numbers of Cotton cards to her people and is now manufacturing them; and she has on hand material to keep in good repair the Machinery of the Penitentiary.

Arkansas can furnish 8 to 10,000 men, and has im-mense quantities of provisions and forage; her shops and factories are all in the hands of the Government, and the General has all needful information in reference to them.

Louisiana can provide 5 to 6,000 men, and has an ex-cess of corn, sugar and molasses.

As to the manufacture of clothing and the mineral re-sources, we refer the General to his clothing and mining bureau, and his Ordnance Department, as more reliable sources of information than any in our power.

Missouri can furnish 1,500 to 3,000 men now in States in our possession, and large numbers are daily accruing. Missouri, at present, is valuable chiefly as recruiting ground

for the Confederate Army. It is thought by the Governor of Missouri that a good system of recruiting in Missouri would add a Regiment a month from that State; and it is also thought that an advance in force in Missouri would add from 20 to 50,000 Missourians to our Army.

As to the means of bringing into use the whole population for the protection of their houses, we urge the execution of the Conscript Laws, with the privilege of volunteering; the calling out the Militia by the several Governors; the enrollment of volunteers for same term of service as State Troops or for the war in Districts where the Conscript Law cannot be enforced by reason of actual or threatened invasion; and we urge by every consideration, the impressment of Negroes to drive all the Teams in Government service, turning loose an army of teamsters, who are good fighting men.

We ask to be discharged from the further consideration of the means for increasing the loyalty, restoring confidence, and keeping the people steadfast, etc., and that the Proposition may be considered by the entire Conference.

(Signed) Thos. C. Reynolds, Chairman.

Which Report was, on motion, unanimously adopted.

Hon. W. S. Oldham, of Committee No. 2, made the following Report:

The Committee to whom was referred the following subjects submitted by Lt. Genl. Smith to us, the question of currency and the best mode of securing the cotton of the Department, without causing opposition on the part of the people, submit the following Report:—

That in view of the difficulties resulting from the occupation of the Mississippi River by the enemy, the cotton of this Department is the only safe and reliable means for carrying on efficient, military operations for the defense of the Country West of the Mississippi, the authority of the General in command, under the circumstances accumulating military supplies cannot be doubtful under the provisions of the Act of Congress, usually denominated the Impressment Act. As it will be impossible to obtain Confederate Treasury Notes to pay for the cotton to the amount that will be required, and as such an additional amount thrown into the circulation largely accruing, our already redundant circulation would lead to the still greater depre-

ciation of Confederate Notes as currency, the Committee make the following suggestion, both as to the mode of payment and as a means of sustaining the credit of the Treasury Notes as a currency. We make the following suggestions for the consideration of the Commanding General. That certificates be executed to deliver to the owners of the cotton purchased, pledging the Government for the payment of the price agreed upon in six per cent Coupon Bonds, the interest to be paid semi-annually from the date of the Certificate in specie, and with the additional pledge, that a sufficient amount of the proceeds of sale of the cotton, shall be invisibly set apart for the payment of the interest Coupons for at least the two first years, and that the Government, will provide for the prompt and certain payment of future accumulating interest. We believe the Planters would prefer such a payment than in Treasury Notes; that such Certificates would not swell the volume of circulation now afloat; and that the value would be estimated much higher than Treasury Notes, and would have a credit that would make them much more available as a means for obtaining whatever the holder might wish to purchase at home or abroad, than any other form of security the Government could issue. Taking possession of the entire amount of cotton with such exceptions and modifications as the Commanding General may deem necessary to meet particular wants or necessities of the People, would take the trade in cotton out of the hands of Speculators now engaged in it, prevent the further depreciation of Confederate Notes, by preventing an amount equal to the value of the entire cotton crop being accumulated in the locality of this Department in which a super-abundance now already exists, and prevent a further demoralization of public sentiment by the greed of gain and avaricious desire, with which it is already infeeled.

Upon the subject of discharging the necessary military obligations incurred, we venture to suggest, that in case money cannot be obtained from Richmond for that purpose, the Commanding General, in the execution of the special powers conferred upon him by the President, cause the Confederate Notes, not bearing interest, which have been funded with the various depositories within the Department to be re-issued and paid out by the proper officers in discharge of the debts for Military purposes, as well as pay

due the soldiers. Although the pledge would not be binding upon the Government, we have no doubt, if such notes are re-issued, with the pledge of the privilege of being re-funded, in bonds of the same rate of interest as new issues, the Government under the circumstances, would not hesitate to ratify and redeem the pledge.

(Signed)

W. S. Oldham, Chairman

The question being upon the adoption of the foregoing Report, the Conference unanimously adopted all that part of the Report which relates to the buying and impressment of cotton and the re-issuing of Treasury Notes in the hands of Depositories, but refused, by a tie vote, to adopt that part of said Report, recommending the issuance of special certificates in the purchase of cotton.

Gov. Reynolds, of Missouri, offered the following resolution, which was adopted:

Resolved: that we harmonize and infuse vigor into the patriotic efforts of the People, diffuse correct information, and discourage disloyalty, an organization should be instituted as follows: The Governors for the time being of the Trans Miss. Department should unofficially compose a Committee of Public Safety, with a Chairman to call it together, when necessary, and act as its Agent, and should provide for Committees of Correspondence in each County and Parish, to correspond with the Governor of Their State, and with the Committee. The People of each County and Parish should form a voluntary Confederate Association to co-operate with the Trans Mississippi Committees; and Thos. C. Reynolds, Governor of Missouri was appointed Chairman of said Committee.

D. C. B. Mitchell offered the following Resolution, which was unanimously adopted:—

Resolved, That from our intercourse with Lt. Genl. E. Kirby Smith, and after hearing his general plan, we have the most implicit confidence in his regard for law, his military skill, and ability, his devotion to Southern rights, and his purity and integrity as a man, and that we believe the united and vigorous support of our people will under his leadership, insure a final complete success.

Chief Justice Merrick, of La.

Senator Johnson, of Arkansas, and Senator Oldham, of Texas, were appointed to present the above Resolution to Genl. Smith.

Whereupon, this Conference adjourned.

(Signed) F. R. Lubbock, Chairman

(Signed) W. K. Patterson,
Sec'y